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NARRATOR Dorothy Brand

INTERVIEWER Phyllis Lotz

PLACE SVV Historical Mus

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Interview with Dorothy Clark Brand, Interview 1
Date of Interview: 10, May 1979; Solvang, California
Interviewer: Phyllis Lotz
Transcriber: Phyllis Lotz
Begin Tape 1, Side 1

PL: The date is May 10, 1979, Mrs. Dorothy Brand is giving a program on the history of Solvang for the Sunny Hills Guild at the Lutheran Church in Solvang.

Brand: Back in 1961 the newspaper put out a fiftyth anniversary edition on the history of Solvang. I interviewed 14 people who represented 14 families who came to Solvang in the early years.

Lets step back to the time before the Danes came when the Franciscan Padres and the soldiers came and started the Mission Santa Ines in 1804. And before that there were the Chumash Indians. The country side was bountiful with lots of food for these people. When the mission was built they gathered in the Indians to be christianized. The Indians did not get along very well with the soldiers and in 1824 they revolted. After that it was never quite the same at the mission. The mission changed hands after secularization in 1833, and back again to the Franciscans but even so it was always a parish church. It went into decay because of no funds from the Catholic Church. At the turn of the century two very interesting people came to live at the mission, Father Buckler and his niece Mame Goulet. They are the ones who began the restoration. They were here when the Danes came in 1911. I want to picture to you what a great deal of cooperation there was between the mission, the colony, and the farmers. It worked out very well. Mame Goulet wrote a book on the mission and what the community was like in the 20 years she lived here. "Santa Ines, Hermosa." The mission needed lots of repairs, they had to replace the beams and who helped them? These fine Danish carpenters.

We all know the Danes are a restless people who love to go to new places. There were young people on the

west coast who were working on ranches and farms and in homes. A group of people in the middle west decided that these young folk had no background in their Danish culture, no folk school, no church so two ministers and one professor, J.M. Gregorsen, Benedict Nordentof, and P.P. Hornsly of GrandView, Iowa, decided to form a committee calling it the Danish ^{American} Committee and they looked in the west for a place to buy.

They bought 10,000 acres of land which had been part of the old Buell Ranch. That is where we are now and they certainly chose a lovely place. There was the river, the sunshine and the fertile soil and the mission that was the center of activity and a little one room school house called Ynez School, where Denmarket Square is now.

On January 11, 1911 Clara Pohls father came, Hans Skytt. He came with a small group and they were the first permanent Danes. He was a builder. Mads Freez was the land agent, our first real estate agent. Together they built and sold and built and sold, and it has been going on ever since.

It cost 4 dollars an acre and there were 750 shares made in this colony and they sold that a 100 dollars apiece. Now, during that first year land was selling at 50¢ an acre. They were building houses at a fast pace as people were coming in from the Middle West, young fellows were coming to work the ranches and farms, coming to see what this new Danish community was like. Keep in mind that with all this building there was no electricity, no telephones, no power tools, and the materials came in on the narrow gauge railroad into Los Olivos. Many of the early Danes came in on the railroad. Axel Nielsen told me once that his family came in on the railroad to Los Olivos and stayed all night and the next day his father rented a wagon for the ride to the new town. They drove down Alamo Pintado and when they go to a point near where Dr. Kaslow's office is now, he told the children to get out and run to the top of the hill and look down at the new community and their new home.

They did and Axel was very disappointed. They could see the mission and the school and a few buildings under construction.

Something about Ynez School. The teacher there was Ynez de la Cuesta. She was a aunt of Elenita Merrill. Ynez was teaching there and living at the mission with Mame Goulet and in March, 1911 we had a terrible rain-storm and the mission being made of adobe, so that the bell tower collapsed and imagine the clatter, a frightening experience.

The Folk School was built as a two story building on Alisal Road at Mission Drive and is still there as a restaurant. It opened November, 1911 and there were 41 students. They held church in the little Ynez School, until the Folk School was built. Late in 1911 Anton Ibsen came, another builder. More carpenters came. Mr. Skytt built a hotel, where Solvang Inn is now. It was a lively corner. New people were coming in all the time and it became crowded, in fact some of the men slept on the floor of the dining room of the hotel. Mr. Skytt met his wife there, she was a cook at the hotel, and I asked him once if she was a good cook and he said, "Oh a very good cook!" She told me she made all the bread for the people, and cooked for all the students and workers. Made lunches for them on a wood burning stove and she said there were lots of flies.

The first communion was in this little Ynez School. Rev. Gregersen held the first communion in July. He had no wine but he knew Father Buckler and asked if he could borrow a bottle of wine and Buckler gave him some wine.

Some of the people who came in 1911 are still with us: Clara Nielsen Petersen, Margaret Petersen Jensen, Carl Rasmussen, Jacob Svensen, Ingo Mortensen. Hans Wulff, now deceased, was the first baby baptized at that communion that July.

The Danish Philosophy. They did not plan on a tourist oriented community as it is today, but they did have to

earn a living. Marcus Nielsen opened the first grocery store. He said, "My father told me always to stay with food selling." "People always have to eat."

The early Danes built Atterdag College in 1914, a four story building that sat on the hill where the Recovery building is now. That was their jewel. They built a gym hall there and the church was built in 1928.

In the early years the young people came to Atterdag to school in the winter because in the summer they worked on the farms. It was a gathering place for the young people as far away as Santa Barbara. They came for lectures and plays and picnics and good times. There were gatherings at Atterdag Bowl behind the college. Many met their future spouse here and I have talked with many.

The Danish language was spoken in the school and at church services, a place where they could have their own ethnic background. The Woman's Club of the Valley was an off-shoot over 50 years ago of the Mother's Club of Solvang School. I'm told the Mother's Club was formed so the mothers could learn English, as their children were learning English in the school.

The Philosophy of the Folk School. There was a great deal of hard work here, they helped each other. In the beginning when the school opened they sat on chunks of wood instead of chairs. They lived in a primitive community.

Viggo and Cora Tarnow. I hope you have time for this. They had done so much for this community, although they did not come in the earliest times. They lived in Atterdag and they had what was called a Vacation School, in which children up to 15 learned things like gymnastics and calisthenics, and plays for young people. I interviewed Viggo Tarnow a few years ago and I would like to read from that interview..."the theory of education was to enstall the philosophy in our young people that would teach them how to live, not how to make a living."

"There was no examinations or degrees. History was one of the main subjects as it points out where we failed and it helps us to learn from these failures. Each generation has to make our history and to profit by the past. History must be a living force. For two decades young men and women have come to and left Atterdag College after a five month course inspired and in a better frame of mind to continue their lives work in their respective communities. One of the reasons that Atterdag closed in 1937 was that immigration stopped and another reason was that compulsory education in California laws conflicted with the Danish Folk School principals." Those of us who knew Viggo Tarnow certainly do miss him.

In 1936 there was a special anniversary, 25th birthday of Solvang with many celebrations planned. Some people say it was the beginning of Danish Days, others say it was a celebration when the parents came to take their children home from summer school. Danish Days was born anyway.

Community cooperation continues, in 1964 we built the hospital with donated funds and of course the Solvang Lutheran Home was built in 1953. When I came here 22 years ago I was interested in the spirit of the home. Six Lutheran churches in Southern California have representatives on the board and they conduct it in a fine way and that they would let Welfare people live there too. It is open to all races, all faiths, and financial situations. The Recovery Residency opened in 1973 and some friendly loans made it possible.

In 1946 the Saturday Evening Post ran an article about Solvang and it brought tourists here. Ferd Sorensen built his windmill on Old Mill Road, the first windmill that turned in the wind. Ray Passke built Copenhagen Square with its Danish Architecture and the last straw was when Baker Carl Birkholm built and move into the Square, Solvang was off and running as a tourist comm-

unity.

PL: I'm going to continue talking with Dorothy Brand this morning. Please go on Dorothy, with more on Solvang and also about your own family.

Brand: Just hearing the end of the tape and about Magda Rutters being the first baby born here in Solvang, I interviewed the mother of Cecilia Fauerso, Mrs. Jensen. She gave me some information on the first baby born here. Mrs. Jensen is now dead but her family came in the summer of 1911 and lived at the new hotel, and helped get the organization going here. She told me that one of the town surveyors, named Arenkel lived in Solvang at the time, as he was doing some surveying for the new town and his wife had a baby because Mrs. Jensen helped delivery it. However the Arenkel family did not stay and Magda Rutters did.

It is interesting to talk with you in this room(the Ellen Taft Gleason Memorial Library) because I am so fond of this place and it is very nice. It was remodeled and built by Don Cameron and had help from my husband, Jim Brand. Don Cameron's wife has been a Docent here for many years. Don worked very hard and he was not a young man at the time. He did the paneling and ceiling, shevling and you, Phyllis have been able to find some of the items in the Library that we thought had been misplaced or lost. It is a fine Library to come to and do research, especially the old scrapbooks and they were invaluable when we published the 1975 edition of the Santa Ynez Valley News, which contained a great deal of history.

PL: I was so grateful that Myrtle Buell gave those nine Scrapbooks.

Brand: Yes, they are wonderful. There is an item in there that I would like to go back to some time, it shows a map or drawing of Nojoqui grade road from Gaviota to Solvang.

The Historical Society was really born in 1961 and I would like to speak of the people who instigated the project. Ellen Gleason, I am a great admirer of hers. She died in 1969. Her friends called her Bud. She had studied how to form a society and museum, how to make records and gave lots of information to many of us, and instilled all the enthusiasm in all of us. The museum drew in many more people. A society is more of a philosophical thing. To have a museum was a tangible thing, to show people, to turn to and ask about things, was what really brought the people in. I would like to comment on Mr. Connelly, the first Curator. His first name was William and he lived here only a short time as he was employed at Vandenberg and was transferred, after the founding of the museum. He was enthusiastic when it came to museums. He pressed all of us into doing the right things for the museum.

The organization got under way in May, 1961 and by the 4th of July we had a bang up celebration and people loved it. We had over one hundred people show up that day. Wm. Connelly had a fine collection of Civil War items which he showed in the West Room, and of course at that time we had only the West Room and what is called the Indian Room. Then there was a little kitchen off the back and a patio, which became the Pioneer Room later. The rooms had been the Eagle Restaurant and then the Bumb Steer Reataurant. I remember we went around to local people and asked if they had historic things to show for our first opening.

PL: It is interesting that it took until 1961 to get a historical society going?

Brand: I don't know, but history had been centered in the Lyons Family of Ballard. Grace Lyons Davison and her sister Jeannette Lyons. Grace wrote a column for the Santa Barbara News Press for years, on the going and comings of the Santa Ynez Valley. She immediately gave all those clippings and other historical things to our new little museum. She was probably 90 by then.

It was time and it was Grace at the center with Ellen helping. It takes 'things' to make a museum and someone like Ellen to put it together. She was helped by the Santa Ynez Valley Womans Club.

The Womans Club had done something else that was worthy and I was part of that also. We moved the Solvang Library which is really the Valley Library from a little tiny room in the Veteran's Memorial Building. It was so small a room that by the time all the books and a desk was in the room, there was no room for the people to come in to read. When I came here in 1957, in May, I saw the library and read in the newspaper that just the year before, Santa Barbara County had one of the highest rates in the whole United States, and I thought, how ridiculous! to have this small a library so I was the motivating force, getting the library enlarged, and we did move into a larger room. I found out who had charge of the Veteran's Building, who would help us, and the Woman's Club with its membership and friends.

End of Side 1

It did take contacts and they did let us in there as an interim situation because it was a meeting room as at that time the community was then much smaller. I remember talking with Axel Nielsen and others and asked for help to get things done. He was not a reader himself as he had quit school in the 8th grade, and this is on the record. He worked with his hands and mind and at human relations, but he was not a student. He said Jeannette Lyons was his last teacher, in the 8th grade and she was the greatest teacher anyone could have. One of the persons in charge of the Veteran's Building was Judge Arden Jensen, then Justice Court judge. He helped us with names of people who would even help move the books. We were a branch of the Santa Barbara System and we had a wonderful woman there and she was helpful in getting the Santa Barbara

Public Library to help us here in Solvang. Kit Franks was our Librarian then. She was a great help. Grace Davison and Jeannette Lyons who are connected with the Historical Museum, were helpful in getting the library moved to larger space. Then we helped to gather support for the new wing of the Vets Building, the east part. We worked hard for all of this.

PL: It seems as though you plunged into community work as soon as you arrived in Solvang?

Brand: Oh yes, we had lived in Michigan in a small town and I had been involved in school activities, as we had three children. It was a way to get acquainted in a new community. Meeting these people who were so easy and good to work with. I can't speak highly enough of them all. Grace lived up into her nineties and was so bright and knowledgeable to the end. People flocked to her home to hear her and see her.

PL: Her sister, Jeannette is our last resource to the old days now and that is why people come to talk to her.

Brand: Yes, and she has such a remarkable memory and speaks so well. The ability to make you feel important to everyone. I remember going to Grace's house one day when she asked me to print out the words to something she wanted to memorize as she was going blind. I printed it in large letters for her to see.

I was the first Curator of the Historical Museum, then Jeannette took over.

PL: What are the duties of a Curator?

Brand: Well, we had nothing then but began to collect items from interested people. This is a fire proof building and that gave us many assessments. People would say, "is it a safe place?" That's how we got the Coiner Organ, in the Pioneer Room and the Coiner Desk. Bill Connelly and I drove one summer night to Santa Barbara to the Coiners place and a daughter was there and gave us these two items. We talked to them and as it was a fire proof building, we got the picture of the large family on the wall behind the organ.

PL: Do they loan items?

Brand: At first we took loan items because they were priceless family things. People would say we will loan it. Some of those items were taken back but many became ours. And now everything is given, no loan items. It makes it very difficult to loan as we have such a turn over of volunteers who keep the books. That costume that the old Danish lady made, the homespun; a dress and cape, hat and all came as a unit and the lady came to see the Museum. There are so many things that have their own natural beauty and are works of art. Are you familiar with that velvet quilt, all handdone that came from Madam Mojeska? We have several items of hers. That velvet quilt is a work of art.

PL: How did you chose Solvang for your home?

Brand: It was rather interesting. My daughter graduated from University of Michigan and was a school teacher, had married another fellow student at Michigan. He got a job with United Airlines, an engineer, and they came to California. My husband had sold his business, he was an electrical engineer and did construction work also. He sold the business to his partner, and we decided to come to California, because he had a brother in Whitter. Our oldest son was going into the Army and our youngest was in 6th grade, so we spent three months looking around Southern California for a home. We started in the Bay Area as our daughter lived there then came on south and as I had a cousin in Santa Maria she brought us to Solvang. We went to Arizona and New Mexico too. It did not take us long to get back to Solvang in 1957.

Solvang in 1957 did not have all this Danish architecture and we had no highrises. I am going to be quite frank about it, it has lost us some of our beautiful views of the mountains.

There was Copenhagen Square, that Passke had built and that was attractive and then he added the windmill

after we got here. Copenhagen Drive was the main street of town and Mission Drive had many houses on it, but they are gone now. The houses built in 1912 on the north side are gone except for the former Marcus Nielsen home, now a realestate business.

PL: Did Solvang change rapidly?

Brand: No, only within the last 6 or 7 years, it has boomed. The "Suede Shoe Boys" see the streets full of visitors and they see that there is money to be made here, they contact the old community leaders and soon have bought up property and businesses.

Axel Nielsen, and I go back to Axel because he was a fine fellow. He saw the trend of how Solvang was going and moved his business to the east side to town. A food market, that was just a cow pasture when we first came. Rasmussen has the dry goods part that was once the Sophus Olsen store in 1911.

This home we live in now is the one we bought in 1957. It was built by a man named Wagner, and he was a hardware dealer in Santa Barbara and it was a second home for them. It was part of the Rasmussen tract and some of the houses around are part of that tract. We have about 2 3/4 acres. The house was here, we did not buy from Wagner, we bought from the sister of Bette Davis, the movieactress, a Miss Helen Lewis, who had Arabian horses. My husband built the first battery driven car in Solvang. It had six batteries and was limited in travel. One house near us was that of "Rock" Sorensen, who built his home of rock. He was very eccentric. He had a pick up truck with inlaid rock on the top.

PL: Tell me about your work on the Santa Ynez Valley Advisory Committee?

Brand: Yes, there is alot of reading and research to be done, if you want to be effective on projects. I can say that since January 1973 we are the unit, appointed by Jim Slater, Fourth District. Mr. Hedland is now our supervisor. I was asked to head up the land use

committee but our major role has been to formulate a new comprehensive plan for the Santa Ynez Valley, which means going over the maps, holding hearings, revising and researching, etc. and talking to the owners of parcels of land, trying to get them to work for the common good. It takes alot of time and patience. I was on the committee for Slater and then was appointed by Hedland four years ago. Under Slater we did the Agriculture Study. This study was requested by the Board of Supervisors back in 1973 to study ways to save our agriculture land from development. We had to search what was prime land to save it. We held public hearing and lots of harsh words were said to the committee. They did not want to be downzoned from 10 acres to 40 acres. That was finally passed and we had two fine workers, Willie Chamberlain and John Wiester. We had absentee owners who came in concerned about large parcels of land. It might be zoned agriculture, but zoned 1 acre. Which is an inconsistancy. So this is the kind of thing that had to be focused on. Lets say that we have at our elbows, the developers who want to develop the land, who see a great deal of money making. They tell us that we, the committe, might spoil economy.

PL: Mrs. Brand, thank you for this interview today.

End of Tape 1, Side 2.